



Sound Healing Summit™

Uplifting Your Vibe Using Himalayan Singing Bowls

Suren Shrestha

Alec: Greetings, everyone. Thank you for joining us here for a new session on The Shift Network *Sound Healing Summit*. We always appreciate having you with us. Our special guest coming up this time around is Suren Shrestha. Suren Shrestha is the master teacher and founder of the Atma Buti School and author of the *book How to Heal with Singing Bowls*. By sharing his knowledge through education, sound concerts and sound healing, Suren has touched the hearts of many as a guide for students from all walks of life around the world on their journey in sound. Suren, welcome.

Suren: Thank you, Alec. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Alec: Yes, thank you for making the time to join us here today, much appreciated, because the bowls are always one of my favorite sound healing tools and instruments. Mainly here to talk about your approach to applying the bowls for therapy, both between client and practitioner and for personal use. But before we go there, I wonder if you'd like to share a little bit about your understanding and knowledge about the origins and history of the bowls.

Suren: Well, thank you for having me again. I really appreciate, Alec. Well, the history and the origin or the age of singing bowls are very difficult to discover. There is no written history about it. There are a lot of contradiction or people have mentioned this year, 12th century ago or eighth century. But again, having a research, reading some of the books. Just like there's a gentleman who wrote a *book Singing Bowls: An ABC*, his name is Geert Verbeke, mentioned in his book that Tibetan Karmapa monks has mentioned that singing bowls are very old, much older than Lama Chin. Some of my teachers have mentioned that traditionally baking bowls where monks carry baking bowls, those bowls are also for sound meditation that people use it for. There is no specific date in the singing bowl history but making tradition singing bowl goes back to 2,400 years to the time of Buddha. And that has been handed down from generation to generation in Nepal, India, and Tibet through verbal teaching within the highly structured family clan or caste system.

A few hours ago, I was googling trying to find out how many languages are spoken in Nepal. It says in Google, according to 2011 census of Nepal, the country has 122 languages. I fall into a clan or caste called Newar. Within the Newar clan, there are many social structures or classes within this class. There's a Shakya or Tamrakar, which Tamrakar meaning by the metal makers. Their last name is the same, Tamrakar, metal makers. They are the ones who make singing bowls, cooking utensils, metal alloy, and so forth. As far as my experience with the bowls, I grew up with the metal alloy bowls used for eating utensils. Though it is a common to see and hear bells every day home or in a temple, stupa, but it is not common to see singing bowls in people's ordinary house. Just to give you an example. Just like I said, there's so many caste systems, so many tribes within the one fourth size of Texas, very small country. Just to give you an example. I have a school called Atma Buti and within Atma Buti, many people come to study.

There was a lady who came in from Nantucket, Massachusetts, twice and second time when she came in, she said one day she went home, but she had nanny, Nepalese lady nanny. Then she had all the bowls, that seven chakra bowls A, B, C, D, E, F, G. She put around her, the nanny put the bowls around her. When she opened the door, she was playing and crying. She had tears in her eyes and all of a sudden, she said, "Are you okay? Why are you crying?" The Nepalese lady said, "I am from Nepal. How come I didn't know such a beautiful thing existed in Nepal?" So not everyone uses. I just wanted to let the audience know, even when you travel to Nepal, it's not any ordinary tool that you find everywhere. Only in a tourist market area or those areas that you see for the tourism. But again, but you see, of course, healers' places, the sound therapists, and those people who use the bowl. For me, even though it's a handful of homes who are singing bowls commonly found, I got to know from my master teacher, Ringu Tulku and Jejen Lama. From them, just like I mentioned, the culture is very rich.

Singing bowls come from a culture where sound and rituals come together and sound images and daily life in Himalayas reminds people of their spirit, going back to roots. This is where I can give you the brief history about the singing bowls of going back. It's what I can mention that it's from generation to generation handed out for certain castes, certain tribes. Then making up the bowl also, it's from tribals, like from a caste systems. Within the Newar, we have even priest within the Newar we call Vajracaryas. Within the Newar, there's like clothing making, just their caste, woodworkers within their caste. Anyway, and then singing bowl has their own metal workers. That's the history. Then since I'm from Khandbari, a small town and there's two towns, there's a very popular metal working, popular town in whole Nepal called Chainpur and Bhojpur, which is I have mentioned in my book that they make alloy metal works including singing bowls, bells, tingshas, and so forth.

Alec: That's fascinating. That is what is very interesting in these times because as you're noting, a lot of the knowledge about the usage of these bowls and their craftsmanship for so many centuries, was like this orally transmitted system of craftsmanship that just went down these certain caste lines. But now, these knowledge and teachings is coming out, so thank you for being one of the voices sharing it.

Suren: Thank you.

Alec: Moving on to the usage of bowls now. They are such beautiful, enchanting instruments. What is it that makes the bowls such powerful tools for healing mind and body?

Suren: Well, there are many modalities that can be incorporated with Himalayan singing bowls. The sound and vibrations from the bowl produces a sound resonance that has profound effect on people and even animals. In this very stressful world, our autonomic nervous system is often in fight or flight response mode. We are ready to flee, run away from the danger, and the bowls can help us to let go of the stressed-out nervous system response. I'm so fortunate to have many students in my school Atma Buti from massage therapists to Reiki master to even there are ten medical doctors asked me to come in to train 2018. One of the doctors, a cardiologist has written a foreword on my book. I'm very fascinated how people have opened their heart and mind. One of the doctors, David Furrow, who is osteopathic, he uses a sound, singing bowl during recovery time of a broken bone. The frequency of the sound of the bowls connects the bone tissue faster. In having them and I have many students from, like I had an opportunity to go teach continuing education in Boston University, in Seattle, and with a naturopathic and many acupuncturists had opportunity to learn.

With my experience, I can mention that how people come up again and take a class and has mentioned that Suren, my acupuncturist, I'm taking this. It's my third time taking with your class. The more bowl I use to my clients, the less needle I use to them. This is a very powerful statement from them and having a craniosacral teacher coming in to learn and all this. And I don't have a medical background, but even not having medical background, I studied civil engineering and then later on going in retreat in 1994. That's how I became more into the sound care. I really involved into it. Having these friends in my life and I understand more of autonomic nervous system, which is divided into two parts. The first, the sympathetic nervous system, and then a second one is, of course, R&R, parasympathetic nervous system which is restore and release, R&R system. The fight and flight system can be turned off by releasing certain triggers or switches in the body. These switches are embedded in our fascia which is between our skin and muscle. When the bowls are played, the vibration is observed by the fascia. This causes the fascia to soften and hydrate, or you could call it gets juicy.

Our fascia is getting that. When the fascia gets juicy, it switches off the fight and flight trigger. By playing the bowls close to body, each of the switches can be turned off. The vibration of the bowls, as well as the frequency of the bowls, has profound effect on switching off the fight and flight triggers. Once the fight or flight neurological system that are in our body calms down. The parasympathetic system automatically has full expression. Then more general approach allowing the vibration of the bowls to surround like our head, our body activates the parasympathetic nervous system. What happens is this allows the healing software to restore and resourcing naturally occurring in our brain to have full expression. The natural endorphins that create peace and harmony, bliss and deep relaxation, or you can call a meditative state can be fully developed. This is why I could say there is no side effect using the singing bowls. It is really, really powerful. A lot of great monks, every time I go to Nepal, I would ask the teachers, including the history of the bowls, even most of them saying it's orally passed on generation to generation. But a lot of monks said using the sound of the bowl for meditation, it activates our awareness so quickly that you're into very still mind.

That means all the meditation is what is it? All the meditation is the one word, the awareness, whatever sensation, our body sensation, our feeling, our thoughts, our surroundings, whatever it is, the awareness is the most and that sound of the bowl really brings it into stillness of mind. Going back into the massage, for those people who use a bowl for massage. The sound and vibration putting bowl directly on the body, it penetrates deeper, and it gives us cellular response. It gets really, for example, how do you say muscle pain like fibromyalgia? Fibromyalgia has a bad vibration and that's the pain is, right? When the harmonic sound goes into the cells, it brings harmonics, and that bad cell will disappear based on good cells. That's how the healing occurs for the simple for the fibromyalgia, let's say. Having a massage therapist also using the bowl is very powerful in a yoga, any sort of a yoga as any there are many, many types of yoga. You can use the bowl and especially savasana towards the end of the time, it's very powerful.

I mentioned earlier the acupuncturist using it is also very powerful. The more, like I said, one of these students, the more bowl I use, the less needle I use. She has mentioned me. It's really nice for chemotherapy during the time. Mayo Clinic also contacted me to create a protocol for the patients' relatives while they're waiting in a room to play the bowls and then also for the patients. You could use for any therapy, hypnotherapies to, you can name it light therapy. I mean, like I said, from Japan, ER doctors came to study the sound therapy in my school. I said, ER doctor, why? The doctor said, well, we have a lot of emotional problem in Japan and there's a lot of suicides. I really like to open a clinic which will ease their emotions using the singing bowls. This is why I came to study here. I could say on and on about what modality, how people are coming in. Including from baby delivery doctor came to study and I was like, wow, it's very fascinating. Then the doctor said, I love bowls, so I love to play to ease the pain for the delivery. It's really nice.

With my experience, I have been four times in Thailand for elephant rescue place. If I play the bowl in pregnant elephant this side of the tummy, the baby would come this side, too. If the baby this side of the tummy, baby goes this side. It is really fascinating how. Also, one of the doctors mentioned that before taking the blood out from the ear of the elephant, they would play a few minutes the bowl and while they're there playing the person who rides the elephant and knows the elephant, when they play the bowl and she would draw the blood out of the ear of the elephant, very peaceful. Nothing happened. There are so many, from animals to people. It's really, really nice. That's why I do have a protocol called emotional release, which is really nice anger, aggression, depression. That's what it releases out. There is a protocol for arthritis. It's amazing, amazing for joint pain, the vibration of the bowl. But there are so many modalities that I can talk about it. But again, I also learned from my students because they said his story, and I use the bowl for this reason and that was amazing results happened. Thank you for asking this question, Alec. I think this is very fascinating for a lot of people.

What can you use, not only for meditation, which gives you awareness so quickly because the sound, you hear it, automatically you can go into your deeper breathing. This is amazing therapy and I really like people. Even a person just a few weeks ago, I had a class, seven-day course, and a person came in just because she wanted to use for her family. Personal reason also people come to study. It's really nice to uplift one's body, mind, and spirit. Really, it's hard to explain because the aha moment is only the person who receives it is the aha moment will happen. The reason I say is that with my experience, I was in Las Vegas Convention. There was a long line in my booth. I had a table, and I had a sample therapy going on because there are many, many, many booths. It's World Wellness Conference in Las Vegas. Since I had a little longer line in my booth begging to receive a sample, and one gentleman comes in and asks me, what does it do? I said, it's very hard for me to explain because each one of us has a fingerprint different. Some people like heavy metal. Some people like country music. Some people like soft music.

It's all different way of expression receiving, but it's profoundly nice, relaxing, I said, but it depends on how you express your feeling. So, it's hard for me to explain. He got in line when I said this and then I did a sample therapy, the seven note bowls, we call seven chakra bowls. I asked him, how was it? And he said, he said, wow, I am from India. I came to participate in this wellness conference, and I'm a medical doctor. I do meditate. He said, receiving this, I feel I can enlighten faster. It's very different for me to say each one of us will have a different way of feeling. You just have to feel for it. Like a few years ago, a lady came to my class. We have an introduction during the class. She said, I don't know why I'm in your class, but when I receive from one of your students for one hour, I've got to do this. I donated \$5 million last year to one charity. I don't need to do for work, but I need to study this. Anyway, this is amazing, amazing therapy with sound therapy.

Like I said, this therapy is so profoundly powerful that we can integrate with any modalities, any modalities. That's what my answer is. It's powerful, Alec.

Alec: Very good, I love those stories. Ultimately, the punch line and the real truth is always as being in the pure experience of sound and the bowls are magical and enchanting on their own. Just playing them but sound itself does its magic. But as you're noting, then taking that and using them in an integrative fashion synergistically with any more specific training it may have, that just creates a beautiful or many different beautiful plateaus for practitioners to work with. That's inspiring to think about. But before time runs away, we're talking about the bowls. Do you happen to have any bowls on hand? Maybe play a few samples and show approaches of how people can play them?

Suren: Sure, sure. I have a few bowls here. These bowls are, let's see, which one shall I use? I think I will use the smaller bowl, or let's see. Well, this bowl, let me start by simple bowl, so people will get, I think this one is also nice. Simple bowl is about five-to-six-inch bowl. You need to put in a platform and then usually how we do is your spine straight shoulder parallel to ground, head tilted slightly, and then the mouth relaxing position, eyes closed. I love closing eyes, but again you can open, slightly open, however people like it. Traditionally, you don't strike or invite the bowl. You just start rubbing and then what happens is the sound will start coming. Can you be able to hear? Inviting is upwards. It might be a little difficult but let me try another bowl. First and foremost is platform and then rubbing the bowl. Once the sound comes in, taking a deeper breath, inhaling long and exhaling long and you want to tune out the bowl with your voice also because the most important thing is being aware of the sound, sensation, feeling. These are the things that you need to have well sound meditation doing it, taking a deeper breath. You can hum also. I have a handle bowl also which is there a lot in crystal bowl also.

This is easy to hold rather than palm because a lot of times when you hold it, it dampens the sound. In order to not to get dampen, that this is handle bowl is also very good. We named this bowl is a Manakamana bowl. Mana means heart, kamana means wish comes true. This is a deity name in our village. Manakamana temple. The temple is very powerful. The reason we named this bowl Manakamana is that every time I go to Nepal in my village, the head priest gives me holy water from the lap of the Manakamana, the goddess Manakamana's lap. From there, he takes the water, and he puts it in the empty bottle, and he tells me to take to America. So, I take it to America. One day, a few years ago, I got a dream to share that with holy water. What we did is we put underneath here. Drill it and then put the holy water and then also we put the crystal as well. It has a blessed water in it. We call it Manakamana. It has a beautiful, beautiful sound. It resonates for a long time because there's no dampening the sound.

These are just a form for the sound meditation because I'm using the smaller bowls, okay? Using the smaller bowls, you can also do the aura cleansing, going around the aura, third eye, and then going to heart chakra, all the chakras, all around it. It's beautiful. If you close your eyes and you just think about going around your head, meaning by third eye and crown chakra, but it's really, really nice feeling. It has a very powerful with etheric cleansing also we call, but there is one, very special one, I like to show you the technique that certain tribes, certain caste uses it because, of course. If I have a few cameras, I could show you on the table and how the vibration works on the body. But this particular one I wanted to share with you is that putting the water inside the bowl. There are tribes who believe that certain diseases are not curable medically. They believe the Divine; the energy will cure it. What they do is they put the water inside the bowl, and then they pray the water. Then they put sometimes the rose petal and also, they put rose water. Well, you'll see when I start working on it. Let's say, person is lying down, the blessed water is here and then they play the bowl like this. So, it goes around the body of a person.

This is amazing therapy because you have a prayer intention, which is our thought and prayer. That's a very powerful intention. Having this on the body, like the one time I had this therapy in Nepal many years ago in a village, out of no reason, I was just crying. I was just crying when I received this water is coming. It's just a beautiful feeling that you would have. I would like people to experience this. I guess Alec and I have been talking about to have a one-hour session coming soon. Well, that's what so far, I have about the bowl. There are so many protocols, so many other techniques that I teach in my class, so people could come to study or to know the knowledge about it. It's profoundly beautiful. It takes you somewhere in a zone that just like when you practice enough of meditation, your mind will ride your breath. Just like that. Playing the bowl, I feel it gets deeper into your soul touch that will make your any obstacle go away, and it will take you into peaceful zone. This is what I've been feeling, and this is what I have been sharing and sharing this I have a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, wonderful friends all around the world coming to take class in Boulder, Colorado, which is I'm very, very blessed. Thank you.

Alec: Yes, soul touch. That harkens back to the name of your school, Atma Buti, which means soul medicine, correct?

Suren: Yes, yes, yes.

Alec: I love that. I've never seen that done before, the technique with the water in the bowl. It's like I get the concept that made me think of like the Masaru Emoto work, among other things, that's been very influential to people how water can take on a charge and become an elixir that's infused with the practitioner's intention and energy, so that's beautiful, that sprinkling of the aura in the field with that sound

and the literal elixir. I love the handheld bowl. I've never seen a handheld metal bowl before. That's very convenient as opposed to having to do this balancing act like touch juggling. Did you develop that style of bowl with the handle?

Suren: No, I would say the handle bowl has been in a crystal bowl, other people have been using this bowl. The only thing develop meaning by when the priest handed me the water several times every time I go into Nepal. Priest said, take this to America. The dream came to me to share that holy water into the bowl like this to put inside drilling here, and then that's the holy water that we put in and we call this bowl as Manakamana bowl. That's the only thing that came up. But it's amazing the Holy Mother is, we believe, everything is we hold our life is belief system. Our sankalpa is the intention. Everything is so powerful. Anyway, that's the Manakamana bowl handle bowl. Thank you.

Alec: That can also relate back to our first segment talking about the history of the bowls. That's one of the traditional methods that the classic bowls are made. They're actually chanted over and prayed over. Intention is going into them as they're hammering the bowls. Is that correct?

Suren: Yes, yes, well, nowadays there are so many bowl manufacturers that are made just the intention is to have wonderful bowls. But traditionally, people make the bowls 25,000 times they chant while the people who are pounding and putting in a fire, bringing in a pounding. The priest six months line up and then they have their scarf. They put prayer beads hiding it, and they chant while they're counting the beads. Once they go 108 times, the priest put one bead in the plate. That one bead is 108 times they counted, so they will collect those beads and it has to have more than 25,000 times chanting. One of the wonderful things that I witnessed is that when I visited one time to Nepal, the bowl maker's house I was in. After finishing making the bowl, the head of the house, elderly lady, came with sage and holy water. She went around with the sage all the bowls what they have made and then blessing with the holy water, sprinkling with the flower and the sprinkling to the bowl. It was a beautiful moment to see and then I asked her what she was doing. She was just saying it that she was praying, giving the positive vibe, saying it anyway, these singing bowls asking Divine to bless their home and bringing them peace. That was her prayer. This is a similar way that I've been doing. Also, this, but again, my employees for many years, actually my employees, we gather together every time we receive the new products at the warehouse. Before we open, we bless it and then we open, and we bless it with incense and sound and then holy water. Ruby, my wife, does do some puja ceremony as well, which is really nice to bless the bowls. The way they make, Alec, what you have mentioned previously about the prayers, yes, not only they do prayers on the bowls, even afterwards, they do it. So, it's a beautiful tradition that has been handed down from generation to generation.

Alec: That's fascinating. I am a believer in that. It gets into these realms that you might not be able to measure scientifically in the lab, but there are centuries of tradition for the power of these things like energetic elixirs and the creation of talisman, the last sacred objects. That's outstanding. But now, as much as possible, you're still sourcing your bowls from people who are making them in these more traditional ways?

Suren: Yes, I do that as well as I do source from Japan as well from Kyoto. It's called the rin gong from Japan and their rin gong is a little higher price. Only few customers asked me to bring it from Kyoto. I do bring from India as well the aluminum bowl which has five metals in it. They are very popular sounds just like the crystal bowls, and they are really nice as well. Then I do sell them from Vietnam as well. I haven't done for several years, but I used to do a lot from Vietnam as well because of the influence by Thich Nhat Hanh, and people have requested me to bring from Vietnam as well because he's from Vietnam. The shape is a little bit, the bottom is a little bit arrow, has to have some sort of a cushion to hold it. Otherwise, it tilts the bowl from Vietnam. Really nice as well. So, I do source from several countries as well.

Alec: Beautiful, that's an outstanding service as well as these days bowls are all over the place in various new age and spiritual gift shops, but a lot of them just don't sound that good, just to be real talk because it's useful to come to find a place like yours that offers high-quality bowls and also education and consultations, I imagine, to help people pick bowls, yes?

Suren: Yes, thank you. Like you said, people just have to know how they are picking up the bowl because everything has a quality and also knowledge. Once you have the knowledge, you will know automatically what's a good one and what's not so. Just like I said, bowls are like a person. Some bowls are easy to talk to. Some people are easy to talk to. I think I mentioned that previously as well, but it's the same. Bowls, you get to know a little deeper to understand the quality.

Alec: What is the website where you offer the bowls and instruments?

Suren: It's a school is called atmabuti.org. That's the school that we offer the classes. It's accredited by state of Colorado, higher education board, and also anybody who studies the National Massage Board has also given the credit for the people who wanted to come study. Then if anybody would like to find the bowls and also, we have a new age products such as prayer malas, bracelets, and so forth and all sorts of bowls, including crystal bowls that we have in serenitytibet.com. Serenity, which is just like a peace of mind, serenitytibet.com. That is the place people can visit to have beautiful and good quality products.

Alec: Thank you. It's highly recommended finding yourself. There's a beautiful array of bowls and also other types of sound implements and tools at Atma Buti for the trainings because we mentioned earlier how the bowls can be integrated with all these other therapeutic modalities, but you also have some very specific protocols and approaches for using the bowls, different types of layouts, which are also described in your book. That's even easier for people to get hands on. Could you say a little bit about the book for a minute or two?

Suren: Sure, well the book, it started early 2000, I think 2001, from a one piece of handout for people and people started asking me a lot a question about it and it came up two pages and few pages. In 2009, we published the book called *How to Heal with Singing Bowls* and 100% of the book that I get royalty and sales. We have a nonprofit organization, 501(c) called *Soul Medicine*. With that nonprofit, we have five orphan kids in my village. The money that we get from a sale of the book, or the royalty goes towards the 501(c) project. It's a wonderful project that we were just a few months ago, so April in Nepal, in my village. Seeing these kids, it feels just beautiful, which is another soul medicine. Just good for your soul when you get happy, something what you do in the community. It just makes you happy. Healing here with a book that I have promoted and having established the school and in some of the money that receiving and healing in a village feels really profoundly happiness. It always started, Alec, but they are in 1999 it started when my best friend passed away in 1994 and then my best friend's wife also passed away and his daughter was raised in the village and that's how we started our project of raising a few orphan kids. Anyway, the book is very much powerful part it plays, and people can purchase in Amazon, or they can contact us also. It's called *How to Heal with Singing Bowls*.

Alec: Thank you. That's a beautiful synergy too, bringing the knowledge and teachings from your homeland over here and then giving back, sending back to orphanages and populations there. That's outstanding.

Suren: Thank you.

Alec: So, on that note, thank you once again for joining us here today, Suren. Much appreciated. Wish we had a little more time. But I just have to encourage people to find their way to your websites, which will be linked below, Serenity Tibet and Atma Buti. Get the book because it's a lot of knowledge to benefit you and it benefits these causes that Suren works with. So highly recommended. Thank you again, Suren. Thank you to all out there listening. We always appreciate having you join us and invite you to come on back because there's still more to come here on The Shift Network *Sound Healing Summit*. We'll see you next time.

Suren: Thank you, Alec. Thank you, Shift Network. Thank you.

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